

Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, November 14, 1801, The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO JAMES MONROE J. MSS.

Washington, Nov. 14, 1801.

Dear Sir, —The bearer hereof is Mr. Whitney at Connecticut a mechanic of the first order of ingenuity, who invented the cotton gin now so much used in the South; he is at the head of a considerable gun manufactory in Connecticut, and furnishes the U. S. with muskets undoubtedly the best they receive. He has invented molds and machines for making all the pieces of his locks so exactly equal, that take 100 locks to pieces and mingle their parts and the hundred locks may be put together as well by taking the first pieces which come to hand. This is of importance in repairing, because out of 10 locks e.g. disabled for the want of different pieces, 9 good locks may be put together without employing a smith. Leblanc in France had invented a similar process in 1788 and had extended it to the barrel, mounting & stock. I endeavored to get the U. S. to bring him over, which he was ready for on moderate terms. I failed and I do not know what became of him, Mr. Whitney has not yet extended his improvements beyond the lock. I think it possible he might be engaged in our manufactory of Richmd. tho' I have not asked him the question. I know nothing of his moral character. He is now on his way to S. Carola. on the subject of his gin. Health & happiness *cum cœteris votis*.